

April 1 Census Counts Message Guidance and Toolkit #EveryoneCounts. #CensusDay

Introduction

April 1 is Census Day and our coalition is organizing press and online events across the country to bring attention to the census and the message that everyone counts, especially amid unprecedented new challenges our communities face. This document is designed to provide an overall narrative arc, talking points specific to the April 1 day of action, template press materials and tactical suggestions to prepare your staff and spokespeople to lift a cohesive “Census Day” message.

Because efforts to reduce the spread of coronavirus have caused many of us to pull down in-person events, we should use this as an opportunity to highlight our digital outreach and any creative strategies for reaching people offline while still maintaining social distancing. The census is underway and our coalition is strong -- part of showing that strength is keeping our message unified and disciplined.

During this period, households can still respond to the 2020 Census! It’s critical that we continue to lift up the importance of responding to the census and how easy it is to do from the comfort of your own home.

We cannot emphasize that enough. With so many organizations and people mobilized across the country, our message will be far **more effective if we echo the same core message while, of course, remembering to customize specifics for the diverse communities we serve.**

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April 1 Talking Points and Frame: Everyone Counts

The theme is straightforward: Everyone counts.

- April 1 is Census Day -- let's take a snapshot of the nation and make sure that every person is counted.
- People across America are keeping their families and communities safe and healthy by providing essential services or staying home. Responding to the census yourself -- online, by phone, or through the mail -- is another way to do your part to help keep your community strong.
- Election Day is not the only day in 2020 that will decide our future. Census Day, April 1, is a chance to make a real difference in our communities. When we fill out the census form, and we make sure that all of us are counted, we can help our communities get the schools, hospitals, and roads we need. If we don't get counted, we don't count. And we'll miss out for the next 10 years.
- We've partnered with [civil rights, immigrant, LGBTQ, disability, infant and child, homelessness, faith-based, labor, health care, education, and youth, etc] organizations because the census is about more than one person, one family, or one community.
- Everyone counts, all across the nation, so let's make sure we all get counted!

2020 Census Topline Messaging

For more messaging guidance consult the [Census Counts messaging toolkit](#).

- It's easy:
 - Life gets busy — that's why the 2020 Census is all about options. You can choose between a paper form, a phone call to the Census Bureau, or a quick online survey. Just 10 minutes can change the next 10 years for you and your family.
 - When you get your invitation to participate in the 2020 Census, you can choose to respond by phone in 13 languages, or by TTY by dialing 844-467-2020.
- It's important:
 - Participating in the census helps determine how many books and computers our kids' school can afford, whether our elders can afford heating in the winter, and if there are bus routes where we need them.
 - Even if you can't vote, the census is a way to participate in our democracy and ensure you're not erased.
 - The census is a way to get back what you put in. You put a lot into this country, building your community and your family. You pay taxes. America couldn't be what it is without you. The census determines what you get out for all that you put in. It's about time you get what's right, what you and your family and community deserve. But you have to be counted. And that means filling out your census form.

- When our people are missing from the census, resources and political power for our communities get assigned to somewhere else — somewhere that already has more money, more privilege, and more power.
- It's protected:
 - Federal law keeps individual data and personal responses collected by the Census Bureau confidential for 72 years. That means the Census Bureau can't share your personal information with ICE or law enforcement, it can't be shared with your landlord, and it won't affect any public benefits you receive.
 - The Census Bureau is not a law enforcement agency, it's a statistical agency. Your personal information is protected by law.
 - The Census Bureau takes seriously its responsibility to protect your data, and is committed to monitoring, testing, and defending its IT systems to keep your information safe.

Completing the Census in the Wake of Coronavirus:

- The census is designed for people to respond on their own. That means you can take the 2020 Census right now in the comfort of your own home.
- Everyone can hop online or call the Census Bureau now or wait for a pre-stamped paper form to arrive in the mail in April.
- When everyone is counted, our communities get their fair share of federal funding to help keep all people safe and healthy. Health care, education, and emergency planning all depend on getting an accurate census count. Help your community by responding to the census today.

Messaging Do Say, Don't Say

- Do make clear that the 2020 Census is still happening and that self-reporting online, by phone, and by mail has always been an option.
- Don't just talk about "programs" or "services" broadly. Instead, talk about specific community needs, like parks, schools, and community health centers.
 - In the face of coronavirus, it might be worth mentioning that responses to census specific health care services, such as the Children's Health Insurance Program, Medicaid and Medicare.

- Do customize and localize your examples whenever possible. For instance, don't just lift-up the potential for funding for "infrastructure projects." Instead, highlight a specific highway or railway in your town that needs repairs.
- Do make clear that your answers will be confidential.. *Individual* responses and personal identification information are protected by law for **72 years**.
- Do talk about "community leaders," rather than "policymakers," when describing who needs and uses census data.

Tactical Guidance

With so many events and participants, our efforts will be most effective with a clear, direct message delivered by people and organizations that reflect America's diversity. This section offers quick "do's" and "don'ts" for April 1:

- 1) DO plan ahead and prepare your members and spokespeople to ensure they are comfortable with the message.
- 2) DO highlight the many ways people can plug in and help get others counted, whether it's joining a textbank or making phone calls.
- 3) DON'T feel like you need to use this day to respond to every possible concern about the census, including speculating about the ways in which the coronavirus could affect the census. It's fine to answer questions, but remember that Census Day is about making sure that we reach as many people as possible to let them know that everyone counts.
- 4) DO customize content for your organization's voice.
- 5) DO engage on social media and respond to questions and concerns, especially constituency-specific concerns like reminding people that there is no citizenship question on the 2020 Census questionnaire.

Template Press Release

FOR PLANNING PURPOSES

DATE

CONTACT: [NAME], [EMAIL], [PHONE NUMBER]

APRIL 1: [X ORGANIZATION] JOINS HUNDREDS OF ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS FOR “EVERYONE COUNTS” ON CENSUS DAY

[DESCRIBE HOW YOUR ORGANIZATION IS SUPPORTING COMMUNITY OR STATE EFFORTS]

WASHINGTON, DC – On April 1, 2020, [ORGANIZATION], a Census Counts campaign partner organization, is celebrating Census Day by mobilizing [COMMUNITY] across [CITY/STATE/REGION/THE COUNTRY] to get counted in the 2020 Census. [ORGANIZATION] will host [EVENTS INCLUDING INFORMATION ON HOW THE AVERAGE PERSON COULD PLUG IN].

“[INSERT QUOTE FROM ORGANIZATION SPOKESPERSON]”

[ORGANIZATION] along with partner organizations like [ANY CLOSE PARTNERS YOU’D LIKE TO HIGHLIGHT] are organizing to ensure communities the census has historically missed have the information and resources they need to get counted -- so they don’t miss out on critical community resources and political power. For [# MONTHS\YEARS], [ORGANIZATION] has organized digitally and directly on-the-ground, including [INSERT ORGANIZING, EDUCATION, AND ADVOCACY TACTICS/STRATEGY].

[ORGANIZATION] has also signed on to the Census Counts campaign’s joint press statement found here. [LINK WILL BE SENT ONCE ORGS ARE DONE SIGNING ON]

BACKGROUND:

[RELEVANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR ORGANIZATION AND THE COMMUNITY YOU’RE REACHING]

[INFORMATION ABOUT THE LARGER CENSUS COUNTS COALITION.
EXAMPLE:]

Census Counts -- which is housed at The Leadership Conference Education Fund -- is a nationwide campaign working to ensure hard-to-count communities aren’t missed in the 2020 Census, through education, training, organizing, and outreach. There are three main prongs:

- The national Get Out the Count (GOTC) coalition
- The States Count Action Network

- Census Champions: a network of elected officials and library trustees working to ensure a fair and accurate count

Our organizations include people and networks who live and work in the communities most at risk of being missed in the 2020 Census. As trusted national and local messengers, Census Counts organizations are able to communicate the facts and importance of the census, provide resources to facilitate participation, and address community members' concerns.

This includes training and educating people and community leaders about the 2020 Census, translating materials into languages the U.S Census Bureau will not, and monitoring Bureau activities to ensure they are best serving hard-to-count populations.

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Social Media Guidance

Suggested Tweets

- Pre-Census Day Tweet: Countdown to #CensusDay: [x] days! This year, make sure #EveryoneCounts by reminding your family, neighbors, friends, and colleagues to fill out the 2020 Census.
- Who counts on #CensusDay? #EveryoneCounts! Every neighbor, every immigrant, every child, everyone. If you're living in America, you should be counted in the 2020 Census. Spread the word and make sure all your friends and family get counted.
- #CensusDay is finally here! With funding for schools, roads and hospitals at stake, how are you ensuring that #EveryoneCounts in the 2020 Census?
- Why does #CensusDay matter to you? **[insert reason that aligns with your organizational mission]**. #EveryoneCounts.

Suggested Facebook Copy

- (Natively uploaded photos and videos to accompany posts)
- What's impacted by the census? The public school your neighbor's newborn will visit for the next 10 years. The assisted living center our mother needs to meet her fluctuating needs. The local representatives your community elects. These things and so much more.

You have the power to shape that future: Complete your census TODAY online, by phone, or by mail.

- Today is #CensusDay and #EveryoneCounts. Whether you're living with your siblings, your parents, your grandparents or family friends -- EVERYONE in your home should get counted on your census.

The census affects funding for schools, roads and hospitals, firefighters, and resources for people who need it most. It helps elect community leaders on school boards and city councils. You have the power to make a difference, right now -- from your house -- by going online, calling the Census Bureau, or by filling out your paper from once it comes in the mail. Get counted today.